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# THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY BIBLE TEXTS.

Addressed to my Children.



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## PREFACE.

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THE little volume herewith presented to American Israelites appeared anonymously, about three years ago, in England. A careful perusal has convinced us that it might be made generally useful to a larger circle of readers than the author apparently intended for it, as it was issued only for private circulation. Mr. Leeser, in order to render it more easy as a lesson-book, has appended headings to the various subjects, which are wanting in the original, and has also corrected here and there some slight verbal inaccuracies, resulting, no doubt, from

want of practice in the writer. As it is, we trust that it may afford to all as much instruction in a small space, as it has given us pleasure in editing it; and we only wish that many more religious works of the kind may be prepared in the vernacular for American Israelites.

THE COMMITTEE.

PHILADELPHIA, Tishry 11, 5621.

## Truth and Falsehood.

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“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord ;  
but they that deal truly are his delight.”

“He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness.”—PROV. xii. 22, 17.

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THERE is no greater sin before God, who is truth itself, than that of lying; none against which we are oftener or more strongly and urgently warned in Scripture. There is, perhaps, no sin which excites the contempt and disapprobation of our fellow-creatures so much as this one of lying; none which so surely meets with its own punishment on earth.

The Almighty, who has formed us, whose creatures we are, knows our inmost thoughts, reads all the secrets of our hearts,

and needs no words to know all the truth. A lie, therefore, cannot deceive *Him*, who is all-seeing, as he is all-powerful. A lie to Him is but another sin added to the one we may have already committed: it can neither hide nor destroy; it can but aggravate. When God asked Cain where his brother Abel was, after he had killed him, Cain answered, "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" These words could not deceive God, who is the invisible witness of all our deeds. He knew well that Cain had killed his brother, and another sin was added to the dreadful one he had just committed, the just punishment for which he could not forego, in spite of all the deceptions he might have been guilty of.

You must not imagine, my children, that there are shades or degrees of truth. Some persons are apt to think that there is no harm in a fib,—in an unimportant untruth. The *consequences* of a falsehood may be more serious in some cases than in

others, the harm we do to others or to ourselves may be greater, but its *nature* must always remain the same: truth and untruth never alter their different characters. God sees them in their true light, not judging, as we weak and imperfect human beings judge, erroneously or superficially. The path of truth, as of all that is right, is straight and narrow; nor must we deviate from it in the least. We must neither go to the right nor to the left, if it be ever so little. To be pleasing in our almighty Father's eyes, to obey his holy words and precepts, we must act and speak with truth —perfect truth; we must neither add to, nor take away from, nor change it. He will then, perhaps, look on our numerous faults, failings, and weaknesses with merciful indulgence, and forgive them more easily.

I have urged upon you the necessity of truth from religious motives, because the Almighty wishes and ordains it, because

every precept of his holy word inculcates it. This should be a sufficient motive for us to practise it strictly, and we need no other. As, however, we are destined to live among our fellow-creatures, as most of our words and actions must necessarily relate to them, we should, by all lawful means, endeavour to gain their love, good will, respect, and esteem. This can be done only by a constant observance of truth. There is no vice the world has so strongly stamped with its disapprobation, its scorn and contempt, as untruth. All honest people will shrink from the liar with an instinctive repugnance, will shun him as something at once contemptible and dangerous: while a truthful, sincere, and straightforward person will be looked up to with esteem and consideration by all who come in contact with him. And, indeed, this is not to be wondered at, if we reflect upon the immense importance of truth in every circumstance of life. In all transactions

between man and man, mutual reliance must be placed on one another ; our word must be trusted, our promises relied upon, or our whole life would be filled with doubt and distrust, productive of nothing but hatred and misery. In commerce we must rely on the good faith of those we have to deal with, or we should never risk part of, or all, our fortunes by placing it in their hands. In courts of law, the characters, nay, the lives of men, depend chiefly upon the evidence given by witnesses who have sworn to say nothing but the truth, and whom the judges are therefore bound to believe. And thus it is in every transaction and circumstance in life which I could mention.

*One falsehood, uttered, perhaps, in an unguarded moment, prompted by fear or shame, will shake our trust in a person : how fatal, then, must be the habit of speaking untruths ! The very truths uttered by an habitual liar are not believed ; his every*

look, word, and action are looked upon with doubt and distrust. To his near friends and relatives his unfortunate vice is a constant source of disappointment and misery; his words and assertions are never believed, his very words of affection become doubtful. In his home he at last becomes a stranger, and among strangers he is shunned, despised, and disliked.

How different is the fate of him who has a strict and constant regard for truth! Looked up to, esteemed, respected, and beloved by all who know him, his very faults are forgiven and passed over, while his good qualities receive an additional lustre, a fresh value, from his truthfulness. It often requires courage—moral courage—to speak the truth, and nothing *but* the truth. It may be the cause of wounding our vanity, of offending somebody we care much about pleasing; it may be the means of getting us into momentary trouble, of our incurring temporary blame; it may

prevent our enjoying some pleasure or amusement we had long been looking forward to. All this may be hard to bear, but it was never said that it is always easy to do right. It is only a strong consciousness of our duty, a strict habit of acting upon principle,—I mean, doing things only because it is right and proper to do them, and from no other motive,—that can prevent us from deviating from this straight and narrow path.

Precisely because doing always right, and speaking always true, is no easy task, we must, from our earliest youth, guard over our actions and words. Truth must become *habitual* to us; the thought of concealing or of distorting it must not even occur to us. A bad habit is easily contracted, and with great difficulty corrected. The one of saying untruths in the small and unimportant events of every-day life is the most pernicious of all: the mind accustoms itself to this want of accuracy

and precision, and will feel little startled at the transition to actual falsehood. O my children, guard against this most dreadful of vices; think of all the misery it can entail upon yourselves and others; think of the wrath of your Almighty Father, who is aware of the lie in your hearts before it has passed your lips; think of the grief of those who love you, and who would so willingly trust you if they could. Think of the contempt and scorn of all who know you, whose esteem you *might* have had, and by whom you are only despised; think of all this, and still more of the condemnation of your own conscience, which you may stifle for a moment, but which you can never silence entirely: and then surely you will keep from lying lips, which are an abomination to the Lord.

## PRAYER.

My heavenly Father, who knowest all things, who seest all hearts, I entreat of Thee to keep me always from the great sin of lying, to help me to guard carefully against falsehood and deceit. Pardon and forgive me if I have ever given way to the dreadful temptation of saying what is untrue ; and help me, O God ! from this time forth to be more watchful over my words and actions, more fearful of displeasing Thee, merciful Father, more anxious to do Thy holy will. Bless and protect me, my God, and watch over Thy child, who is too weak and too frail to live a single hour without Thy help. Amen.

## Respect for Parents.

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“Honour thy father and thy mother.”

THIS, the fifth commandment, is the one which, of all others, children ought to obey, which every dictate of affection and gratitude should lead them to consider as the holiest of God’s commands.

Those children who, from the moment of their birth, have had good and kind parents ever near them, and have been surrounded by their care and their love, can perhaps hardly realize the greatness of such a blessing. They have never known the want of the care that seems to be given naturally and as a matter of course, nor the misery of being given over to strange hands; they have never missed a father’s

and a mother's kind word and smile, their affectionate caress, nor their tender care. Do they—do these fortunate children—ever pause to consider at what cost all this devotion may be lavished?

Think, my children, that from the moment of your birth you are the object of the anxious solicitude of both father and mother; day and night you are the subject of their thoughts, and constantly you are the point towards which tend their mutual exertions. A mother cares for and watches over her child with the tenderest anxiety, feeds it with her milk, sits by its bed during its sleep, spends many a sleepless night in sorrowful but patient watching when it is ill.

When the first early years of infancy are passed, and childhood begins, other cares, but still more anxious ones, also commence. The culture of the mind and heart is to be undertaken; the difficult task of education is to be achieved. And

here, who can tell the heart-throbbings of the mother?—her fears and doubts as to the result of her efforts, her fond hopes and expectations,—whether her beloved child will become the God-fearing, the truth-loving being she so much wishes,—whether he will realize the bright idea she had formed of him when she saw him helpless and innocent lying in her arms! Who can tell the pain she feels at an unamiable word or look, at a selfish or ungenerous action, at a false or deceitful line of conduct? Who can know her joy when she finds this child kind, good, truthful, and virtuous,—such, in short, as her fond love hoped and pictured him to be?

If to the mother is intrusted the more immediate superintendence of her children's bodily, mental, and intellectual welfare, the father has not the less his share of care for them. On him devolves the duty of acquiring the means for the accomplishment of all I have above mentioned; he

must work for their maintenance and for their education. He is often obliged to be out early and late, in heat and cold, in snow and rain ; often obliged to give up the ease and comfort of his home to bring to them that which is to procure food, clothing, books, and comforts of all kinds. For himself he wants little, but for his children he requires much ; and unremittingly and cheerfully he works on for them as long as strength remains.

And when old age comes on, as it surely will at last, parents are often left alone ; sons and daughters are gone into the world to seek after fortune, fame, or happiness ; father and mother are left alone, after a life of toil, of care, of anxiety, aged, weak, and infirm ; they are left alone when the society of their children would be a help, a comfort, and a consolation to them. But still they murmur not ; their love knows no selfishness ; they think not of themselves ; their happiness is complete if they

can be assured of that of their children; they ask of the Almighty no other reward, no other return for all they have done, for all the sacrifices they may have made.

But, children, is not your debt to your parents very large? Do you not think that what you owe them is almost more than a life of love, of gratitude, and of obedience can repay?

It is seldom that children are not fond of their parents; love for our father and mother is a natural sentiment, which God has placed in our hearts, which to a certain extent we share with the animals, and which it would be monstrous not to feel. But this affection is not always shown and proved in the manner most agreeable to the feelings of parents. A parent is not gratified by a momentary mark of affection, a light and passing caress, if it be followed by an act of disobedience; a parent is not satisfied with a *promise* of

improvement and amelioration, if the *will* to do better be not sincere and persevered in. Our love for our parents must be shown by implicit obedience, by a constant and unceasing endeavour to remember their words, their precepts, and their injunctions, by listening to and following their advice, which is invariably given for the good of their children, in silence and patient submission.

The child who does all this in his infancy and childhood, and who in his youth looks up to his parents with trust and confidence as his best and truest friends, will surely become a good and virtuous man. And if in later years he becomes the support, the stay and consolation of their old age, and, thinking with love and gratitude of all they formerly did for him, bears with their weakness and infirmities, he will indeed receive God's best blessing, and have well obeyed His fifth commandment.

## PRAYER.

O Lord God, Thou hast showered down numerous blessings upon me, and among the most precious of them Thou hast given me kind and affectionate parents. I know that if I displease my earthly parents I displease Thee also, my heavenly Father: may I therefore ever strive to behave towards them as I ought; may I ever show them obedience, love, and gratitude; may I ever consider them as my best and dearest friends on earth; and may I by my conduct try to repay them for all their tender care of me. Help me, O my God, strengthen me to do their will and Thine. Amen.

## faith.

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"The soul which is lifted up is not upright within him. But the just shall live by his faith."—HABAKKUK ii.

THE meaning of faith is, to believe that a thing is really true, or that it really exists, though we cannot see it with our eyes, hear it with our ears, or touch it with our hands. Faith is to believe implicitly that which is told us by those we love, respect, and revere, or that which is affirmed to us by those whose truth we have no reason to doubt.

God requires that we should have implicit faith in Him; that we should believe in the truth of His holy word, which was given us to be obeyed, and to be a guide to us through life; that through His good-

ness and His power all blessings are vouchsafed to us, and that all He ordains is for our good here and hereafter. .

Our reason, or that which we can actually prove and show, teaches us but little; and were we to depend solely upon our reason, or our own so very limited experience, we should indeed be miserable. God's works and God's ways are inscrutable to man's understanding: we can but look, and admire, and wonder, and obey, without asking *why*, feeling that we must be content to know that His will has ordained all for the best.

We have never seen God, it is true—at least we have seen Him only through His wondrous works; but who amongst us doubts that He exists—exists everywhere, —that His holy and beneficent spirit pervades all creatures and things,—that His protecting arm shields—that His watchful eye sees us always? There are numberless things and places that we have never our

selves seen or been to; but we believe, nevertheless, in their existence, because we have been told of them, or have read about them. We know that there are countries far, far away, curious and wonderful plants, animals, and productions of all kinds; we believe that burning deserts, as well as regions of ice, really exist, though we have not been to them ourselves, because we do not doubt the veracity of those who have. This is believing, or having faith in what others tell us.

The house we live in is made of bricks, and stones, and wood, put together and built by a quantity of workmen; but these materials, the clay for the bricks, the wood and stone, no mortal hand has made; and though we did not *see* them made, how can we doubt but that God formed them—that His all-powerful hand and all-seeing eye directed their growth for man's use and enjoyment?

See with what wondrous beauty and re-

gularity every thing in nature is created How wonderful is all on earth and in the heavens! from a tiny leaf or crawling insect to the largest tree and most gigantic animal—from the shells on the sea-shore to the shining stars in the skies. How is every living creature provided with all it wants, and how every thing is ordained with the utmost nicety, precision, and regularity! On considering all these things, who can doubt that an all-powerful Hand has created and rules the universe?—and who would not place his faith on so great, so merciful, so beneficent a Father? Surely none but the blind and the foolish.

But the Almighty requires not only that we should believe in Him and His works, He also requires that we should believe in His words and in His promises; that uncomplainingly, willingly, and cheerfully we should do His will and perform His commands by a strict performance of our duties, and that we should bear without a

murmur the trials that in His wisdom, and also in His goodness, He thinks fit to send us.

Do you remember, my children, some of the beautiful examples the Bible gives us of faith in God's words and obedience to His will?

When the world became so wicked that the Almighty determined to destroy all its inhabitants, there still existed *one* righteous man, whom God said He would save from the universal destruction. To this man—to Noah—the Lord said that He would cause a flood to cover the whole earth, which should drown all its inhabitants, but that *he* should build an ark which might swim upon the waters, in which he and his family were to escape from their fury.

God, who is as merciful as He is just,—who desires not the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live,—did not send the flood immediately, but allowed

a hundred and twenty years to elapse between His warning and the fulfilment of His punishment. During this period, though the course of nature proceeded uninterruptedly, the sun shining by day and the moon by night, and winter and summer succeeding one another, still Noah believed in God's words: he built the ark as had been commanded, and awaited the flood that was to destroy the unrepenting and sinful people. Alas! it came, and all perished on the face of the earth,—perished in their wickedness and unrepenting. Noah only and his family were saved, because he had faith and was righteous.

There is another man the Bible tells us of, whose whole life was such an example of faith that he was called "faithful Abraham." God chose more than once to try his faith and constancy in the most painful manner; and yet he never failed.

God first commanded him to leave his

own country, his kindred, his father's house, to wander forth towards an unknown land, where the people, the language, the customs, all were strange to him, and where idols, images of stone and wood, made by the hands of men, were worshipped, instead of the one, sole, true God. Abraham obeyed without a moment's hesitation, and, believing with implicit faith in all God's gracious promises, left his own land, with his wife, his household, and his flocks, for the land of Canaan.

Later a still greater trial of his faith was sent him. God commanded him to take his son Isaac, his only, his much-loved son, the son of his old age, whose seed the Almighty had promised should become as numerous as the sand on the sea-shore and as the stars in the heavens—God told him to take this youth, and to offer him up as a sacrifice to Himself. Can you picture to yourselves the old man's bitter re-

gret, his heart-rending sorrow, when he bound his son Isaac on the altar, and was about to sacrifice him with his own hand? But he never hesitated for one moment: the thought of disobeying God's commands seems not to have entered his mind; and had not the voice of the angel of the Lord called out to him, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God," he surely would have completed the sacrifice.

Let these beautiful examples help to teach us to have faith in the Almighty; to believe His words and His gracious promises to those who do His will; and, feeling convinced that all He ordains is for our good, let us submit to His decrees without questioning and without a murmur.

## PRAYER.

O Lord ! I pray Thee to give me faith in Thy holy word and Thy gracious promises. Make me believe with my whole heart and my whole soul that all Thou hast said is true, and that all Thou doest is perfect. Let me not complain or murmur at illness or misfortune of any kind, since I am sure that every thing that comes from Thee is for my good. Let me believe entirely that Thou always carest for me with a father's tender care while I am on earth, and that after my death Thou wilt take me to Thine own heavenly abode. Amen.

## Charity.

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“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”—

Ps. xli. 1.

CHILDREN,—you who have kind parents to take care of you, who give you warm clothing in winter, good food whenever you are hungry, pretty toys to play with, and nice books to read, all and every thing you want,—do you ever think that there are many, many of God's creatures who are in want of these things?—do you ever think of the poor, and of their misery? I dare say you sometimes do; but you can hardly know, or even imagine, how much poverty and wretchedness exist in the world. But it is necessary that you *should* know it, in order that you may do all in

your power to relieve the needy, and also that you may be rendered doubly grateful for all the blessings the Almighty has showered down upon you.

God has not given us riches merely for the sake of gratifying our own selfish desires. If He has allowed some to be richer than others (when, if He had so willed it, He could have made all alike), it is that the rich may help the poor; it is that feelings of love, of compassion, and of generosity, may be called forth in some, and in others those of gratitude and devotion.

God has not given us riches merely to indulge in every comfort, in every luxury, in every fancy, while hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures are in want of the common necessities of life. If we were oftener to consider how many human beings there are who are hungry, without being able to get food,—naked, without being able to obtain clothing,—cold and shivering, with no fire to warm them,—

tired, weary, and suffering, with no bed to lie upon:—we should, perhaps, feel ashamed to squander sums away upon things we do not want, which we scarcely look at or care for when once they are in our possession,—sums which might have made many a poor family happy for months,—which, perhaps, might have saved many a poor wretch from starvation and despair.

If God has given us riches, He has also placed a great responsibility upon us. He has intrusted to us the happiness of others; He has bidden us take care of our poor brethren; He has enjoined us to stretch forth our hands to them when they are in need, to clothe them when they are naked, to feed them when they are hungered, to console them when they are in grief. The rich have much to answer for before their Maker; and happy are those who, in the day when they must appear before His awful judgment-seat, will feel in their

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conscience that their riches have not been misspent,—that they have not been selfishly and wickedly wasted only on their own gratification.

It is generally the case that we are placed in a more fortunate condition than so many others by no merit of our own. The money which affords us so many comforts and enjoyments has very often not been gained by our own efforts, neither by our talents nor by our industry. Does it, then, belong so exclusively to us? Are we entitled to keep it for ourselves alone, or have not the poor a right to share it with us?

Let us remember, too, that these riches which we prize so much—which we are too apt to value more than we ought—which are the gift of God—may be taken from us. Let us not think, in our vanity and presumption, that prosperity *must* last forever. We are all in the hands of God, who even in His mercy and beneficence

often sees fit to send us the most unexpected trials. The richest may by some accident, or rather let me say by the Divine will, become poor in a day ; comforts and luxuries to which we, perhaps, have been accustomed from our birth must be foregone ; we are made to feel the bitterness and hardships of poverty ; we become like those fellow-creatures we have forgotten or despised in our prosperity.

Forget not, then, the poor, dear children ; think of them often with pity, with tenderness, and with charity ; accustom yourselves early not to live on selfishly, busied only with your own pleasures and enjoyments and wants. Do not wait till you are asked to give, but seek out the opportunities yourselves : these will not be wanting. And if your time or your amusements are occasionally sacrificed to please or relieve others, believe me, you will be most amply repaid, and you will gain more than you give. When you behold

the patience, gentleness, and resignation with which the poor endure and suffer,—when you witness their gratitude for the smallest gift, the most trifling relief,—you will feel ashamed to be passionate, unkind, or out of temper, you who are surrounded by every blessing; when you are inclined to murmur at some little disappointment, at some contradiction, at the failure of a favourite plan, you who have all and much more than you want, think then of the hungry and the naked, and be silent and content. Think of them, help them, console them, that the Almighty may help *you* in the time of your trouble.

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#### PRAYER.

O Lord! Thou hast made me so much happier, Thou hast vouchsafed to me so many more blessings than to thousands

of Thy creatures, that I know not how to thank Thee sufficiently. I can only pray to Thee to make me charitable and compassionate towards those who suffer and who are in want, and to prevent me from being selfish and from thinking only of my own gratification. Place in my heart, O Lord! the wish and inclination to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to console the sorrowful, as long as I have the power and the means to do so, that I may thereby be less undeserving of all Thy bounteous goodness to me, and less unworthy of Thy favour and merciful protection, O my God! Amen.

## Neighbourly Love.

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"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."  
—LEVIT. xix. 18.

GOD, who is so full of love, and kindness, and mercy towards His creatures, has commanded us to love one another as we love ourselves ; and though at first sight it seems but natural that we should obey this commandment,—that beings who all have the same Father in heaven, who are all subjected to His laws, to whom His mercy is shown alike to all, should indeed love one another,—still, upon consideration, we shall find that often, alas ! too often, we *do not* obey this commandment, and that few, very few of us, entirely fulfil its spirit. For to do this we should frequently be obliged to return good for evil, often

obliged to practise a forbearance full of indulgence and charity, and very often to give up our own wishes and desires for the sake of pleasing others.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” means, that we should be full of tenderness and brotherly feeling to every one, even to our enemies, or to those who have done us wrong; for God has said, “Thou shalt not avenge or bear any grudge.” How much hatred and dissension would be spared in the world if such kind and gentle feelings were more encouraged!—how much anger and bitterness would be exchanged for love and harmony! The heart that can withstand a kind and forgiving word from one it has injured must indeed be hardened and ungenerous!

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” means, that towards strangers, or those who have no immediate claim upon our affections through relationship, we

should be kind, polite, and serviceable whenever we can, that we should never wound their feelings by a word spoken in thoughtless jest in their presence, nor utter words of derision or contempt concerning them when they are absent; for God has again said, "The stranger shall be to you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself."

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" means, that we should be good, and charitable, and considerate to the poor, for God bids us take care of the widow and the orphan; *they* especially require our love and protection, the fatherless, the unprotected, and the forlorn.

But, above all, those words mean that we should be kind, respectful, obliging, and forbearing towards those we always live with, with whom we spend our lives, who are nearest and dearest to us, and whose happiness ought to be *our own* happiness. It ought to be the constant effort,

the earnest wish, the never-failing endeavour, of each member of a family to add to the comfort and happiness of all the others as far as he possibly can. Even the youngest child is capable of doing this.

How often do we see in families—and how shocking a spectacle it is!—children speaking disrespectfully to their parents, or obeying them with reluctance; brothers and sisters quarrelling and disputing about the merest trifles, speaking to one another with cross and ill-tempered words and looks, persisting in having their own way, without the least regard to the inclinations of those around, and ever unwilling to give up their own for the sake of pleasing others. This is loving thyself, *not* thy neighbour; this is giving way to selfishness, which is the veriest antidote to kindness and affection.

I believe the great secret of those who are generally beloved in the world is their unselfishness, their readiness to yield up

their own pleasure and wishes to others, and to sacrifice their own convenience and inclinations whenever it is necessary for the comfort and happiness of those around them. But if we would love our neighbour as ourself, we must do more still. We must learn to return good for evil, to give a kind word in return for a harsh one, to perform a generous action in return for an ungenerous one. There is but little merit, or rather none at all, in yielding kindness for kindness: the reverse would be mere treachery. What you expect to receive from others you must begin by giving yourself; as we sow, so shall we reap.

Affectionate behaviour, gentle words, kind actions, and an unselfish temper, are sure to bring their own reward, even in a worldly sense; for he who possesses and practises them will certainly win the love of all who know him, and will be able to exert a wider and better influence than he could possibly do by harshness and tyranny.

But if love and kindness sometimes fail to produce the desired effect,—if our motives, which may be of the best and purest, are mistaken and misjudged,—let not a feeling of disappointment or discouragement deter us from persisting in the right path, but let us consider that there is a higher Judge, who sees our inmost hearts and reads our most secret thoughts: from *Him*, therefore, let us look for our reward, and from none on earth.

If, therefore, you wish, dear children, to gain the approbation of your heavenly Father, you must love your neighbour as yourself; you must refrain from speaking crossly; you must not refuse to do a good-natured act, because it occasions you momentary inconvenience; you must not give way to impatient or angry feeling. And when you are on the point of giving way to such feeling, try and pause for a moment, and ask yourselves, “Has God commanded me *thus* to love my neighbour?”

And in this case your neighbour is, perhaps, your own brother or sister. Ask yourselves, "Will God approve of me if I act thus? and have I a *right* to do so, when He has bidden me love every one, even my enemy, how much more those who are near and dear to me?" Ask yourselves, "Should I like this to be said or done to me?" Remember, if those about you have faults or habits which are disagreeable to you, that you yourself are far from being perfect,—that perhaps your own faults are even greater than those you so well remark in others. Be, therefore, indulgent and forbearing; consider that the Almighty, who is perfection itself, bears with us, and forgives our failings and our sins. Should we, then, not bear with our own fellow-creatures, who are as good, often much better, than we are ourselves? Be not selfish, always thinking of your own gratification, neglecting that of others. If you would really love your neighbour as yourself,

study *his* pleasure as well as your own, and by love, charity, considerateness, forbearance, and forgetfulness of self, endeavour to obey the spirit of this beautiful commandment.

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#### PRAYER.

I pray Thee, O my God, to make me remember always Thy commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Place love and kindness in my heart towards all my fellow-creatures, especially for those who are near to me, and to whom I am indebted for my comfort, pleasures, and happiness. Give me strength to resist angry feelings; prevent me from using harsh and ungentle words. Make me obedient and respectful to my parents, forbearing, obliging, and affectionate to my brothers and sisters, considerate and polite to all around me, compassionate and charitable to the poor.

Fill my heart, O God, with some of that universal love, charity, and forbearance to my fellow-creatures that Thou, Lord, so unceasingly exercisest towards all Thy creatures. Amen.

## Honour for the Aged.

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“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.”—LEVIT. xix. 32

THERE are, I am afraid, many children who do not obey these words, and who, instead of treating the aged with honour and respect, look upon them rather with contempt and ridicule. These children can hardly form an idea how wrong and foolish such behaviour is, and how bad an opinion all right-minded persons must have of them. It is wrong, because God has expressly commanded us to honour the aged, as the text above tells us; and it is foolish, because from them we can learn all the wisdom that experience teaches,—a better master than many books.

Young people are apt to fancy that because their knowledge is somewhat newer and fresher than that of old persons, it must be better, and they consequently look down upon their ideas and opinions with contempt, and upon their advice as useless. How mistaken are they !

An elderly person, who has learnt but little from books, will still know more of what is really important in life than the most accomplished young person. Inter-course with the world, sorrow, and experience, have taught the old man that wisdom which is not to be gained by study. The young should, therefore, listen to his words with respect, attention, and reverence, and follow his advice, which probably will be given with tenderness and indulgence, in remembrance of youthful feelings from which he knows that he himself was not free.

When you behold old men or women with old-fashioned dresses, and manners, and

language, maybe you will feel inclined to laugh at them, to think them antiquated, ridiculous, and tiresome. Your manner, words, and conduct towards them will reflect your thoughts; it will be cold, disrespectful, perhaps impertinent. Reflect, then, my children, when you see aged persons, that time has whitened their hair and weakened their steps; that probably much sorrow and suffering has bowed them down; that perhaps they have outlived friends and children, and that their latter years have not fulfilled the happy promises of their youth.

Think that they were once like you,—young, full of life, and joy, and hope, with bright faces and light steps, and that you, should God spare you, will once become like unto them.

Instead, then, of ridicule, of coldness or indifference, show to the aged respect and reverence. Try to add to their comfort and their amusement; let your attentions

be first shown to them, the best place given to them; grudge not the hour that may seem tedious to you, but which you can enliven to them by lively and cheerful talk; attend to their wishes and wants, indulge their fancies, and overlook their weaknesses. Try all that lies in your power to lighten the weight of their years, the burden of their infirmities, to cheer and console them for all the pleasures they can no longer enjoy, and let not neglect and indifference embitter the short period they may yet have to remain on earth.

Care for the aged, that you, in your turn, may be cared for when youth is gone and its brightness and its joys are fled forever; for the Almighty hath said, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man."

## PRAYER.

O God ! I am but a child, ignorant and inexperienced, and I pray Thee, therefore, to make me feel all due respect and reverence towards the aged, who know every thing so much better than I do ; whose words can teach me wisdom, love, and goodness ; whose experience and white hairs I ought to honour. Help me, O Lord ! to overcome vanity and self-conceit when I am inclined to think that I know better than the old, and enable me to bow my head with all due humility before them. Enable me, my God, to do Thy will in this respect as in all others. Amen.

## Meekness and Pride.

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"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth *me*, that I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, on the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."—JER. ix. 23, 24.

"When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom."—PROV xi. 2.

You see, my dear children, from these texts, that God bids us to be proud of nothing we may have in this world, neither of our wisdom, our power, nor our riches; and in order that our hearts may be kept humble, free from that pride which is a snare to our souls, He bids us know and

understand *Him*, who, besides exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness towards all His creatures, has formed the earth and the surpassing wonders we see upon it.

And if we reflect but for a moment on ourselves, on our weak and faulty nature, on the few short years of our sojourn on earth, during the greater part of which we are but helpless infants or suffering from the infirmities of age, what, indeed, we must needs exclaim, have we to be proud of? Such reflections must, on the contrary, fill us with the deepest humility.

Pride and wisdom seldom, if ever, go hand in hand together; for the wiser a man is, the greater cause he discovers for humility. The really wise man will turn in humble gratitude to the Almighty for His precious gifts, and will acknowledge his littleness before the infinite greatness of his Maker.

The astronomer, who passes sleepless

nights in watching the wonderful changes and movements of the orbs of heaven, instead of being proud of his patience, of his indefatigable researches, of his profound calculations, will raise his dazzled eyes towards the dwelling-place of the Almighty in silent amazement at such unfathomable splendour, and feel humbled in the presence of the immensity of the creation.

The naturalist, who studies the surface of the earth—the geologist, who searches for the wonders enclosed within its bosom—the botanist, who examines the properties and formation of plants and flowers—in short, all those who devote their lives to the study of the endless wonders of nature—feel, not *pride* at their acquired wisdom and science, but *humility* on comparing their own limited knowledge, which enables them to proceed to a certain distance, but must needs remain within the bounds marked out for the human understanding, with the infinite wisdom, power,

and greatness of the Almighty. The more they learn and study, the more they become convinced of the utter impossibility of knowing and understanding more than a very small part of His wondrous works.

If wisdom is not to make us proud, how much less so ought power and wealth! However great may be the power of a man, it can be but limited—limited over a certain number of men like himself, and limited to the few years he has to remain on earth. A man who is all-powerful in one country, or in one part of the world, is, perhaps, totally unknown in another—his name even may never have been heard there—and the mightiest of mortals will, at the end of a few short, fleeting years, be placed by death on a level with the lowliest of the earth.

More than one name of which you have read in history will, I dare say, recur to your memory, of those who, in the midst of their pride, their power, and their wealth,

were suddenly cut off from all their worldly splendour by God's righteous judgment. Nebuchadnezzar, Crœsus, Alexander, were among the great and powerful of the earth, and all were thrown down from their height by misfortune or untimely death. Had these men (and many others of whom history tells us) used the gifts vouchsafed to them by God with all due moderation and humility, perhaps He would have continued to bless and prosper them. Had they used them for the advantage of their fellow-creatures—had they endeavoured to promote the happiness and welfare of mankind, having such plentiful means and opportunities in their power, rather than constantly having in view their own aggrandizement—had they lifted up their souls in grateful humility towards their Creator, adoring *Him* for His bounteous gifts, and recognising in *Him* the sole Author of their power and greatness, instead of indulging in the most

presumptuous and wicked pride and vanity — perhaps they would have been permitted to reign on in peace and tranquillity, instead of suffering a severe chastisement.

Without being a mighty king or a great prince, there are many into whose hearts pride will creep almost unawares for some supposed advantage. Some are proud of their wealth, some of their superior rank, others of their beauty or their cleverness. But remember, my children, that pride on account of any one thing, be it what it may, is sinful. Whatever superiority we may possess, it is seldom we have gained it by any merit of our own; and, even should we owe something to our industry and perseverance, let us thank God for His gifts, but feel no pride at their possession.

And if we really have some advantages to boast of, the greater is our responsibility, the more we have to answer for before the Judge who has intrusted us with much. If our station in life is high, the

greater and wider-spread is our influence, and the more watchfully we ought, therefore, to guard over our actions and words, none of which are insignificant if they serve as an example to others.

If we have riches, instead of glorying in them and using them only for the gratification of our own selfish desires, let us thank God, who has given them to us to be the means of relieving the wants of those who are poorer than ourselves and who need our help; and if beauty and talents have been bestowed upon us, let us beware that pride and vanity do not render them dangerous instead of valuable gifts. At the awful hour of judgment the Almighty will require of us an account of the manner in which we have used His gifts: woe to those who have thrown them wantonly away, or who have made them the stepping-stones to a proud heart! Happy those who can say, Lord, I have not misspent Thy gifts.

God, then, loves a meek and humble spirit; He bids us not to glory in the goods and riches of this world, which are fleeting and unstable, but to lift up our hearts and minds to *Him*, to try as far as our feeble and imperfect nature is capable to know and to understand *Him*, that by the contemplation of His wondrous works, which not only the astronomer, the geologist, or the botanist, but every little child, daily sees around him, we may become so convinced of our own littleness and unworthiness, that no room for pride be left in our hearts.

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## PRAYER.

I pray Thee, O my God! to make me have a lowly heart and an humble spirit, and to prevent me from being proud within myself, or from showing pride towards my fellow-creatures I know that I am but

one of the thousands of millions of Thy creatures, to whom Thou hast given the light of heaven and the fruits of the earth as well as to me. I feel that I am not better nor wiser than my fellow-creatures generally, not nearly so good or so wise as many of them, and that, while I feel deep and heartfelt gratitude for all Thy numerous bounties to me, no pride should find place in my heart for what Thou hast vouchsafed to me. Fill me, O Lord ! with humility, so that my looks may never be proud or haughty, nor my lips utter proud or disdainful words. Amen.

## Unity.

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“Behold! how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”—Ps. cxxxiii. 1.

THE most pleasant sight that can meet the eyes is that of a numerous family living on kind and affectionate terms with one another; the most painful, that of brothers and sisters constantly quarrelling and disputing among themselves. Even on the shortest acquaintance it is easy to discover whether or not the members of a family habitually show kindness and affection towards one another; the manner, look, tone of voice, at once betray the customary behaviour; and however careful children may be to conceal their faults before strangers, still the force of habit is so

great, so irresistible, that at the first opportunity, at the slightest provocation, they will certainly give way to the ill humour, violence, or haughtiness which they are accustomed to practise in every-day life.

There are brothers and sisters who really love one another, who would be sincerely grieved if illness or any other misfortune were to befall any one of them, but who still will not sacrifice a wish or a moment's pleasure for the sake of the others, and who manage to embitter the lives of all by the want of habitual kindness, without which all daily intercourse becomes worse than unpleasant. If harmony and unity are to reign in a family, there must be mutual yielding and mutual forbearance. Each one must remember that the others have their own tastes, their own wishes, their own inclinations, as well as he has, and that it is but fair that these should be consulted and complied with as well as his

own. Each one must bear in mind that he has probably faults just as disagreeable and difficult to put up with as any of those he so well remarks in his brothers and sisters; he ought, therefore, to look upon such faults with forbearance and indulgence, trying all he can to correct them with mildness and gentleness, while he endeavours to hide them from public view.

There is no fault children dislike more in their companions than tyranny: they will at once revolt at peremptory words and haughty gestures, while they will readily yield to soft, kind, and persuasive language; these will gain *power* as well as *love*.

Good-nature and unselfishness are the next great requisites for peace among brethren. That willingness to oblige, for which plenty of opportunities will occur in the course of every day, and readiness to give up one's own wishes when they interfere or do not coincide with those of

others, are the sure test of an amiable disposition, and the surest way of securing peace, harmony, and good will among all around.

Cultivate such feelings among yourselves, my children, that your childhood and youth may glide softly and happily away, and that you may prepare yourselves for the difficulties which you are likely to meet with hereafter in the battle of the world. Here, when your parents' roof no longer shelters you—when fond and loving faces no longer smile upon you—when you are no longer likely to meet with much indulgence or forbearance—you will feel glad, and you will be fortunate if early discipline has rendered you gentle and patient, if your good temper can disarm severity, and your unselfishness can win for you general regard. You must endeavour early, and with perseverance, to check those movements of impatience and ill temper towards one another which lead to

constant quarrelling and bickering, and which must eventually overcloud the happiness of your home. Remember that you are children of the same parents, who love you all with the same affection and treat you all with the same care and tenderness; that you are all the creatures of our Father in heaven, who bestows upon you all the same blessings, who extends over you all the same mercy and protection, and who bids us love our neighbour—nay, even the stranger—as we love ourselves. Remember that only those are beloved, only those are happy, who forget themselves for the sake of others—who show good temper and kindness, and use gentle and affectionate words to all around them; and it is by these alone that brethren can dwell together in unity.

## PRAYER.

I pray Thee, my God, to give me the strength and inclination to be always kind and affectionate to my brothers and sisters; to be gentle, obliging, and forgiving towards them, and to try by my manners and words, and by my whole conduct towards them, to gain their good will and love. If Thou hast commanded us to love *all* our fellow-creatures, how much more ought we to love and cherish our own brethren, and try to add to their happiness and their well-being!

Enable me, Thy weak and sinful child—enable me, O Lord! to practise self-denial, good temper, and gentleness, by which alone I can live in love and harmony with my dear brothers and sisters. Amen.

## Uprightness.

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“They that are of a foward heart are an abomination to the Lord; but such as are upright in their way are His delight.”—PROV. xi. 20.

“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are His delight.”—PROV. xii. 22.

“He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord; but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth Him.”—PROV. xiv. 2.

MANY are the passages that I might quote from Scripture to prove the immense importance of truth and uprightness in our conduct through life. God, who is truth and purity themselves, requires from His creatures truth and purity in all their words, actions, and thoughts. His all-seeing eye discovers every one of our actions; His all-knowing mind pen-

trates into the inmost recesses of our heart. No wrongful act, therefore, can be concealed from Him, nor can even an evil thought remain unknown to Him. This never-ceasing presence of the Almighty within and around us is felt by us all, and we call it our *Conscience*.

My children, hardened indeed must be that human being in whom conscience is entirely silent; to whom its still, small voice brings no warning, and who follows his sinful path deaf to its call, unrepentingly and without remorse. We can scarcely believe it possible that such a being can indeed exist; but there are such.

The force of habit is very great: there are many things which at first view seem quite impossible to us; but if our thoughts recur to them with pertinacity, the difficulty will gradually diminish, till at last, by frequent repetition, we shall accomplish them with the greatest ease. And thus it is with sin. A sage hath said that a sin re-

peated appears to the sinner no longer odious. And this is most true. If we do not from our earliest youth accustom ourselves to listen to our conscience, that voice of God that lives within us—if we do not from the first shun with fear and horror what is wrong and false—if we do not with strict severity examine our own hearts, and discover our faults both of commission and omission—if we do not carefully watch over ourselves and guard against their recurrence:—sin will become familiar to us, our conscience will die within us, and we shall become hardened and remorseless.

No words that I could use, my children, could paint to you in sufficiently strong colours the misery that may be occasioned by untruth, deceit, and a want of conscientiousness,—misery to ourselves, misery to all around us. Let me, therefore, entreat of you to cultivate early, to practise always, strict truth and conscientiousness. Remember that an all-seeing Eye is bent upon

you, even when you think you are acting in strict secrecy. Your parents may be deceived by you; they can but point out the path of duty, and ardently hope, and fervently pray, and anxiously expect that you will follow it. They cannot watch *all* your steps, know *all* your thoughts, discover *all* your actions; but your Almighty Father does. And be certain that every deed and thought is registered by *His* hand, who rewards or chastises according to these deeds.

In infancy and in childhood we are surrounded by loving parents, by nurses, governesses, and teachers; we are accounted irresponsible beings. Our wants are cared for, our steps watched over, and we are shielded, as much as in human power lies, from all harm. Little more is required of us than *obedience*—obedience to wishes, commands, and regulations which are all framed for our good. And here the first lessons of conscientiousness are to be

learned. Strict obedience will be yielded only where *conscience* is our guide. An injunction may be neglected or disobeyed without the knowledge of parent or teacher; one line of conduct may easily be adopted in their presence, and quite a different one in their absence; things that are harmful, words that are improper, actions that are blamable, may be refrained from before others, and indulged in in private. Thus a want of conscientiousness leads to deceit and hypocrisy. Besides the wickedness of such conduct, what possible advantage can accrue from it? If certain things are prohibited, it is because they are hurtful to body, mind, or soul, and will remain just as hurtful whether parents and teachers are aware of their commission or are ignorant of it.

Unripe fruit is forbidden because it is unwholesome: will it be likely to make you less ill, because your mother or your governess does not see you eat it? Certain words

are forbidden, because they are rude and unladylike: will they change their character if you pronounce them out of hearing of those who have forbidden them? A certain action is wrong, unkind, ungenerous: will it become the contrary of all these,—will it stain your moral character the less, because you have committed it in secret—at least concealed it from all *human* knowledge?

And still some children are apt to think that many things are prohibited from caprice or tyranny, not from a real and sincere desire for their welfare and happiness,—so reluctant, so tardy, is their obedience to those who are intrusted with their guidance.

But childhood and youth soon pass away, and with them we lose the loving care of the mother, the untiring vigilance of the teacher, to protect and watch over us. The age of reason arrives, and we are left to ourselves. The responsibility of our

actions is shared by no one; the weight must be borne by ourselves alone, and alone we must answer for them before our fellow-creatures, and hereafter before a still higher tribunal—the judgment-seat of the Almighty. What then is to guide us among the temptations to which we must expect to be exposed in the world? What is to keep us from evil, from guilt, from shame? What is to preserve us pure and stainless? What, but *Duty, Principle, and Conscience?* These must lead us on in the narrow path of righteousness;—these must keep us from giving way to temptation and to the dangerous impulse of the moment;—these must prevent us from “following the delight of our eyes and the inclination of our hearts” when they are perverse and wicked and likely to lead us astray.

You see, then, my children, how necessary it is to follow the dictates of your conscience, to listen always to its warning voice, which is never silent until long

habits of carelessness and inattention have rendered it inaudible. Remember, that if the path of duty is sometimes difficult and rugged, it *always* leads to peace and happiness.

An upright and truthful character gains the esteem, respect, and confidence of all around; a pure and tranquil conscience procures an inward peace and contentment which no worldly pleasure can give, and which no worldly sorrow can shake. And when at last the awful moment for quitting our earthly existence draws nigh, surely the pang of death must lose its bitterness, if we may be allowed to hope, without too much confidence and presumption, that we shall meet in heaven a merciful and indulgent Father, who, for the sake of our truth and uprightness (however imperfect even they may have been), will, perhaps, leniently judge our numberless faults and weaknesses.

## PRAYER.

Lord God! I come to supplicate Thee to implant in my heart truth and uprightness; to give me strength always to listen to Thy voice within me, which never fails to warn me when I am about to do wrong. I feel myself so weak and so imperfect, that without Thy aid I shall not be able to resist temptation when it comes in my way, nor to follow Thy holy precepts, as Thou hast commanded, with my whole heart and my whole soul. Lend me, therefore, Almighty Father, Thy help; teach me the right way, and keep me therein; enable me to be strictly conscientious; guard me from falsehood and deceit, make me a lover of truth, and that I rejoice to do Thy holy will in all things. Amen.

## The Sabbath.

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“Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.”—EXODUS xx. 8-10.

HAVE you ever thought, my children, of the great mercy of the Almighty in giving this commandment to the children of Israel? Have you ever considered how much beauty there is in this institution, which Moses was the first to publish to the world, and which has since been followed and adopted by every nation which owns a religion?

Six days are given us for our various occupations—for study, for business, and for work. During six days of the week we are to fulfil the duties which our station in life has allotted to us; to perform the

work (for we have all of us our work to do on earth) which God has appointed to us; to pursue our worldly avocations,—to some almost constantly replete with joy and happiness, to many, alas! full of toil and difficulty. The seventh day, the Sabbath, is set apart to be dedicated to the Lord, to be a rest for the weary, an interruption from toil—to be to all a day of reflection, of peace, and of thanksgiving.

At the end of every week, so full of our earthly concerns, so taken up with worldly occupations and thoughts, God has commanded us to pause, and to set aside one day, dedicated peculiarly to Himself, to prayer, to holy thoughts, and to rest. He knew our sinful and imperfect nature; He knew how weak we are against temptation, how easily carried away by selfishness, how apt to forget His numberless blessings, His never-ceasing love and mercy: He, therefore, instituted the Sabbath, to give us an opportunity, of regular and frequent recur-

rence, of turning to Him, of entreating His forgiveness for our faults and sins, of examining into our own hearts, to see what is wrong there, and of returning thanks for the blessings so plentifully showered down upon us.

On this our Sabbath-day, my children, we are to cease from our weekly toil, our daily occupations, it is true; but we are not, therefore, to spend it in unprofitable idleness. We are to keep it holy—not to profane it by conduct which the Almighty disapproves of. The poor man, who gains his own and his children's bread by the sweat of his brow—who is up early in the morning and late at night to gain a scanty meal for those he loves—puts aside his tools on the Sabbath. To him it is indeed a day of rest, a day of calm enjoyment, a welcome interruption to toil and hardship, during which he tries to bury in oblivion the cares of the past week, and gains fresh strength for those of the coming week: *he*

no doubt lifts up his heart in deep thankfulness to the Almighty, who has given him this holy Sabbath, this one day of rest.

You, my children, know no toil that brings weary limbs and an aching head ; but let not the Sabbath be less welcome, less precious, for that ; it is, perhaps, still more needful to you than to the poor artisan.

Be careful, or perhaps your worldly prosperity may make you forget Him who gives it to you, and who can as easily take it away ;—be careful, or perhaps your happiness may make you selfish, inconsiderate, and proud ;—be careful, or perhaps too much good in this world may make you heedless and forgetful of another, and unfit to appear hereafter before your Almighty Judge.

On this Sabbath-day let it be your task to consider of all these things ; look into the depths of your own hearts, and see

what is amiss there. Oh, you will find much that need be mended, much that requires correcting or altogether to be rooted out. Look back upon the week that has just gone by: have you thought often of God, His mercies, and His blessings? Have you felt grateful enough for them all? Have you been afraid of offending Him by your evil conduct? Have you endeavoured to get the better of faults you know you possess? Have you not been guilty of selfishness, of unkindness towards your brothers and sisters, of disobedience towards your parents and teachers, of some untruth either in your words or actions? Have you not neglected precious opportunities for improvement?—have you not lost many moments in idleness and frivolity—moments that can never return, that are lost forever, and that *might* have been well and profitably employed?

These thoughts ought to occupy your

mind most particularly on the Sabbath-day, and this self-examination ought to lead you to form good resolutions, which you must pray to receive the necessary strength to carry out during the week. As each Sabbath returns, perhaps some slight improvement may be discerned ; some fault may, perhaps, be eradicated, or, at any rate, weakened ; and God, if He sees you earnest in your endeavours to do right, will surely give you courage to persevere in the right path.

Besides encouraging such reflections as these and an examination of yourselves, you should keep the Sabbath holy by refraining especially, on that day, from all evil. Do not quarrel or dispute among yourselves ; refrain from unkind words and actions ; try to add to the enjoyment and amusement of those around you ; give up your own inclinations and wishes for the sake of others. You will thus add to the peace, the contentment and happiness of

your home, and you will thus render holy this day of rest, and obey the commands of your Maker, who ordained that it should be sanctified as a day peculiarly dedicated to Himself.

Look, then, my children, upon the Sabbath in this light, not merely as a day upon which your usual tasks and lessons are set aside, to be spent in profitless idleness, but as one of God's especial benefits—as His own day, when we are to try to mend and purify ourselves—a *portion*, at least, of which ought to be spent in serious reflection and severe self-examination, free from all worldly and frivolous thoughts.

Life ought to be considered not merely as something to be enjoyed and passed through lightly and with careless ease, but as a period of existence during which we have duties to perform—even duties that are often difficult and arduous. We are to consider that God has not placed us here to follow solely our own will and inclina-

tions, to satisfy our own selfish wishes and desires; He has placed us here as reasonable and responsible beings, requiring us to correct our faults and to subdue our passions with an energetic will, to follow unswervingly the path of duty, to obey the dictates of our conscience, and to answer before Him for our thoughts and deeds on earth.

And the Sabbath has been mercifully given us to facilitate this work; we have been *commanded* to lay aside for this day our worldly affairs, that we may be at leisure to devote ourselves to our heavenly concerns and to the welfare of our immortal souls; for this one day out of the seven the din and turmoil of the world are to be shut out, that the body may rest and the soul gain strength for fresh toil and struggle. For this the Sabbath-day has been given us, thus to be employed, thus to be sanctified, thus to be kept holy.

## A PRAYER FOR THE SABBATH.

I come before Thee, my God, with especial love and gratitude on this holy day to thank Thee for Thy numberless blessings, but more particularly for having given me the Sabbath-day, which I am to sanctify and dedicate to Thee. Enable me, O Lord, to spend this holy day in a manner worthy of and pleasing to Thee; let me keep from strife and anger; fill my heart with love and good will towards all who surround me; and, above all, give me the power and understanding to appreciate all Thou doest for me, and all the inestimable blessings Thou conferrest upon me in Thy infinite goodness and mercy.

On this day of rest, after a week of worldly occupations, let my spirit indeed rest in Thee—rest in peaceful gratitude—

rest in the happiness and security of a pure conscience—rest in the blessed hope that Thou wilt continue to guard, protect, and watch over me. Amen.



## Industry.

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“Go to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways, and be wise.”—PROV. vi. 6.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”—ECCLES. ix. 10.

WE have all got our work to do on earth; God has appointed to every one of His creatures their especial business and peculiar duties, and He reproves and condemns idleness in every possible shape in every being gifted with reason. It behooves us to determine within ourselves what our duties in life are, according to our age, our station, and our means, and then to follow up these duties with all our strength and all our soul, to perform the work allotted to us with untiring and unflinching diligence.

We have all of us, without a single exception, duties to perform towards our God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves: we owe to our Almighty Father implicit obedience, unbounded love, gratitude, and the humblest submission; we owe to our fellow-creatures affectionate solicitude, kindness, and indulgence, besides respect and deference to those older than we are; we owe to ourselves, as creatures of God endowed with immortal souls, conscientious and careful watching, severe examination of our actions, thoughts, and motives, a careful suppression of our faults and vices, while we should as carefully nourish and cultivate whatever good may have been implanted in our hearts and minds.

You see, my children, that here is plenty to be done; and these are duties from which no human being can be exempt without incurring the displeasure of the Almighty, the disapprobation of our fellow-creatures, and the condemnation of our

own conscience. Here is enough to occupy our hours, days, and years; it is *more* than we can do, if we do it not with energy, with perseverance, and with diligence.

There are some men—doubtless they are good men—who think that the service of God is incompatible with the cares of the world; that to lead a virtuous life it must be spent far from its turmoil, its vanities, and its temptations. These men, therefore, retire into monasteries, where, secluded, they forget the world, and give themselves up to prayer and quiet contemplation. Such a life may be void of *bad*, but can it be productive of positive *good*? Thoughts of God need not be separated from other good and holy thoughts; love of God need not bar out love of our fellows: on the contrary, care, and thought, and love, and solicitude for His creatures is one of the ways of showing our love and gratitude towards the Creator, and the fear of temptation ought not to make us run from

it like cowards. No! we must remain at our post, to fulfil the duties of the station in life in which God's providence has placed us—to act, to resist, to suffer, as the case may be, with all diligence, with energy, with courage, with meekness and resignation.

Nothing in the world that is worth having can be acquired without pains and trouble; our brightest talents require steady cultivation, before they can be developed or become of any avail. The most gifted men the world has seen have been as much distinguished for their untiring industry as for their genius. Great astronomers have made their invaluable discoveries and their wonderful calculations at the cost of endless watching and sleepless nights; geologists have penetrated into the mysteries of the earth only by patient and laborious investigations; celebrated authors have produced works which surprise, and delight, and instruct mankind only by the aid of deep research and constant study; the magnifi-

cent works of art, left to an admiring world, are likewise the result of patient study and constant practice, without which even the hand of genius would lie dormant and powerless. In short, no great invention or discovery—no great work of art, of science, of literature, or of utility—can be accomplished without the help of persevering diligence.

If those who are endowed with brilliant talents and transcendent genius must ever pursue their various avocations with zealous industry: how much more must those, the greater part of mankind, of moderate capacity and with little or no talent, follow up their occupations with steady patience and diligence! For these let it be a consolation to know that as much—nay, more—may be effected by courageous perseverance as by talent. Let not, therefore, those despair of success who cannot boast of genius; they may rest assured that their constant and conscientious efforts to attain

a good and profitable end will not remain unrewarded.

As I have told you, my children, there is much to be done in life, and there is but one way to do it properly: we must employ our time usefully and diligently,—time, that precious gift vouchsafed to us all, and which so many of us misuse, or throw wantonly away.

Remember that each hour as it goes by has its appointed work, which, if it remain undone, is an hour gone and lost forever! Hours form days, days become years, and a few fleeting years make a lifetime. For these hours, days, and years—for this life of ours—we shall have to render an account before an all-seeing Judge; an awful moment will come for us all, when *He* will ask of us, how we have spent our time on earth; if we have frittered it away in frivolous pastimes, in useless pursuits, in selfish amusements; if we have dragged through it in dull idleness and listless dreaming; or

if we have employed it diligently and usefully, not neglecting our own cultivation and improvement, while we have devoted our strength and our energies in giving relief to and performing kindly acts towards our fellow-creatures, in affording them consolation, in adding to their happiness, to their comfort, and to their general welfare. The true way to show our love and gratitude and our implicit obedience to our Creator is by an active, diligent, praiseworthy use of our time; by performing the work allotted to us with cheerful alacrity and unceasing perseverance; by never allowing our love of ease, our indolence, or our want of thought to interfere with the performance of the duty belonging to the present moment. Let every thing have its proper time, and never put off till to-morrow that which may be done to-day, are maxims that ought ever to be present to our memory, and to regulate our actions.

I have thus far described diligence as an

imperative duty; let me now show it you, my children, in the light of a positive pleasure. When do you feel most contented and happiest? On those days when you have been idle, listless, and negligent, losing your time, inattentive at your lessons, or leaving them altogether undone, or on those days when every hour has been well and actively employed, your studies properly attended to, and your other duties performed with readiness and zeal? When does your recreation—when does any pleasure or amusement—give you most enjoyment? After a day of work, or a day of idleness? I know your answer. And the same answer would be given by every living and rational being. Those only who have no fixed occupation, who have not in early life formed habits of industry, diligence, and activity, complain of the weary length of the day; only those whose minds have never been directed towards the serious and really important things of life

seek to waste their time in frivolous amusements and worthless pursuits. Would you be among these unfortunate persons, my children? Would you make of your existence a mere blank, profitless to yourselves, and void of one good act performed towards others? Would you wish, when once death has called you away from this scene of action, to leave no vacant place behind you, no grateful blessings on your name, no tearful regret for your memory? Surely not; but, if you would have it otherwise, you must not sit idly by, selfishly enjoying the goods which a beneficent Providence has placed within your reach. You must be *diligent*, you must take advantage of time, employ it well and actively, perform your duties conscientiously. You must not permit years to roll away, and wait till age, and care, and sorrow have taught you some bitter lessons, but employ well and diligently the precious days of your youth. Try to be able to say, at the

close of each day, "I have not thrown it away—it has not been quite profitless," in order that when *life* closes, when *time* is about to cease, you may not be forced to own the dreadful confession that you have thrown away a lifetime.

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## PRAYER.

Thou hast intended, O Lord, that all Thy creatures should have their appointed work on earth, that none of us should live in idleness. The birds, the bee, the ant, are busily employed all the day long: should *we*, rational and responsible beings, live less in accordance with Thy will than they? Give me, therefore, O God, the power, the strength, and the inclination to employ my time with all due diligence; enable me (for without Thy help what can I do?) to fulfil with zealous and constant perseverance and industry the duties that

fall to my lot. Help me, O Lord, to spend well and profitably to myself the precious days of my youth, that I may in later years be of service and benefit to my fellow-creatures; and give me the understanding to know and to feel how pernicious and how wicked is idleness; and give me an ardent wish to please Thee and to do Thy holy will in this as in all other things. Amen.

## Immortality.

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“The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”—ECCLES. xii. 7.

GREAT and solemn is the subject of immortality, my children, to which it is well that your attention should be called early and frequently. It is a subject over which some of the best and greatest of men have pondered during whole years of their lifetime; it is a subject over which the virtuous—those who suffer and who have faith—think with love, with hope, and with gratitude; it is a subject which many of us consider with wonder and awe; and, alas! it is a subject which too many of us are apt to forget altogether.

The word of God tells us that our body

is made of the dust of the earth, and that to the earth it shall return. Our body grows, develops itself, arrives at a certain degree of perfection, then begins to decay, dies, and returns to the dust whence it came. Thus far man shares the fate of all other living things on earth. But the word of God also says the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Our spirit or soul is not to undergo the same fate as our body: it is to suffer neither decay nor death; it is to live eternally with the eternal God. And here lies the great and blessed privilege of man. We read in the Bible that the Almighty created Adam in His own image,—not meaning His own image bodily, for we are to give no similitude whatever to God, but in His image spiritually. God infused into Adam, from whom all other human beings have inherited it, a part of His own immortal spirit, a soul which cannot die.

And now, my children, I would point

out to you the deep and portentous meaning of these words ; I would lead you to think of their unspeakable importance ; I would entreat of you to pause and consider them, not only now and but for an instant, but often—nay, constantly—in the midst of your duties to serve as an encouragement, in the midst of your pleasures as a safeguard, in the midst of your sorrows as a consolation.

What higher, more elevated, more cheering thought can encourage us in the daily and hourly accomplishment of our duties than the conviction of our immortality ? What greater incentive could we possibly have to the performance of good and holy deeds than the certainty that they will lead us to eternal bliss ?—or what greater reward could our imagination frame for a life spent in the service of God and for the benefit of our fellow-creatures ?

We are placed here on earth, not as mere animals to perform instinctively the

laws of our nature, but as rational and responsible beings, whose deeds and actions are registered by a *merciful* Being indeed, but by one who is no less just and all-seeing; who has given us our reason and our conscience to *judge* between right and wrong, and our free will to *choose* between them; who will hereafter call us to account for our actions on earth, and who will reward or punish us according to these actions. If we have dreadful reasons to tremble at the thoughts of ill doing, have we not quite as much cause to rejoice and to hope when we do right? Besides the temporary reward we enjoy from a tranquil and satisfied conscience, have we not within us the conviction, that we are preparing for ourselves a happy immortality, which is to unite us spiritually forever with a merciful and all-loving Father, who, after having protected, sustained, and preserved His virtuous children while they

were wanderers on earth, will receive them after death to everlasting happiness?

We are very apt to place an undue importance on the things of this world; to allow ourselves to be led away by the enjoyments, the pleasures and frivolities that often surround us, and to forget in them the serious and important side of our lives. When you feel this to be the case (and how often it *is* the case I need hardly remind you), try to pause, my children, and to think of your immortal souls: all else will then dwindle into utter insignificance. Ask yourselves, Was it for such things as these that I was created?—for things fleeting, unstable, evanescent, and full of vanity that God gave me the gift of immortality,—for things that bear not the test of days, much less of years,—for things that seem important to-day and are gone to-morrow? Am I to consider this world as a place of mere pleasure and enjoyment, where I may spend my days in thought-

less amusements, in frivolous pursuits, and in selfish ease, or am I to consider it as a place of probation, where I have my duties, often difficult and arduous, to discharge,—where I have frequently to suffer and to struggle to prepare myself for another, a better, an *everlasting* world? Such thoughts as these are not necessarily to lead to gloom nor to the rejection of every innocent pleasure and amusement; far from it. The Almighty has placed us in a world full of beauty; He has endowed us with faculties capable of appreciating the glories of nature and the innumerable advantages and blessings that surround us on all sides. The bright sun, the brilliant and fragrant flowers, the singing-birds, are sights and sounds that must needs infuse joyousness in every bosom: indeed, God has made all nature glad and happy; man only, with his faults and vices, has cast a gloom over the earth. Only those pleasures, therefore, are to be condemned

that debase the mind and corrupt the heart, that make us selfish and unmindful of our fellow-creatures, that lead us *to* frivolity and vanity, and *away* from high, good, and holy thoughts and feelings, that make of us mere animals, when *He* has made us immortal beings.

You are very young yet, my children, and from your birth have been cared for and watched over with tenderness, surrounded by blessings of every kind. You know not what grief is; or, if your childish sorrows seemed as such to you, it was but as a light fleeting cloud that passes over a summer sky,—it soon passed away, leaving all bright as before. But grief will sooner or later reach us all, and there are trials in life for which there is no *worldly* consolation. Then, and perhaps then *only*, do we learn the true meaning of immortality, do we fully realize the hope, the faith, the consolation, the certainty which it is capable of affording us. It is then that we are

enabled to raise our hearts with calm resignation, with earnest thankfulness, with fervent adoration, to that merciful Creator who has promised us a blessing hereafter, who enjoins us to look hopefully forward beyond this life towards another, where grief, and sorrow, and tears, and sin find no place, and where, once more united with those whom we have loved and lost here, we shall lead an eternal life of joy, of peace, and of innocence.

Such a life, such an eternity, it is in the power of us all to attain, but not without having first laboured here; not without having endeavoured with all our heart, our strength, and our might to fulfil the commands of the Lord; not without having completed to the best of our abilities the task confided to us on earth; not without having accomplished the duties that fall to our lot faithfully and conscientiously. Is the prize to be gained not worth *more* than the price to be paid?

## PRAYER.

O my God! give me the strength and the power to persist in accomplishing Thy holy will and commandments. Help my weakness, correct my failings, and keep me from temptation and evil-doing. Thou hast given me, O Lord, an immortal soul, Thou hast breathed into me some of Thy eternal spirit; enable me, then, to be worthy of such a gift. Give me also some of Thy truth, of Thy loving-kindness, of Thy holiness; cleanse me from my sins; make me pure; make me fit to appear, when it is Thy will to free me from this earthly life, before Thy blessed presence. Such is my wish, such is my hope, such is my earnest prayer to Thee, Almighty God, who art good and merciful to all Thy creatures, and who wilt surely listen to all whose hearts are sincere, and whose faith in Thee is perfect. Amen.

## Teachers.

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"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye."—Ps. xxxii. 8.

IT is one of the commandments of God that we should love, honour, and obey our parents before any one else in the world ; those whom we ought to respect and obey next to them, are those whom our parents have placed near us to watch over and to instruct us, to whom they have delegated their authority, when circumstances prevent them from being themselves with their children. The persons who are chosen to fulfil such places of trust, naturally possess the full confidence of parents, are believed by them to be worthy of so important a charge. Teachers ought, therefore, to be

treated by their pupils with all the respect and consideration which their situation, so full of responsibility, of difficulty, and of self-sacrifice, demands.

Those children who behave with habitual disrespect towards their teachers, whose general behaviour during their studies is self-willed and inattentive, must either be very heartless, or very giddy and inconsiderate. Such children have surely never thought of the hardships of a teacher's life; how he is constantly obliged to go out, early and late, in all weathers, in snow, and rain, and wind, and burning heat, from house to house, teaching the same things over and over again to children who are often stupid, or lazy, or obstinate. All this he must do with patience and good temper, quietly and uncomplainingly, to gain his daily bread and that of his wife and children. What other reward can he hope for, in return for all his efforts, for a life of fatigue and priva-

tion, than the progress and advancement of his pupils ? He has given up fame for himself since he devotes his time to others ; his pupils must therefore repay him for so much trouble and sacrifice, by being attentive to his lessons, and respectful and obedient in their behaviour towards himself.

If a teacher's life be far from an easy one, that of a governess may be rendered a hundredfold more painful. A teacher, after his labour for the day is over, returns to his own home to be cheered by the sight of those dear to him. With them he shares his evening meal, with them he can converse of his cares, his hopes, and his fears, and in their society he can rest from his fatigues and his troubles. A governess has no such consolation to cheer her on her often dreary path. She generally leaves her home young, goes away from her mother, from whom she has received the same watchful and tender care as you, my children, have received from yours ; is

separated from her brothers and sisters, who have all her life been her play-fellows and companions ; she leaves, then, all she loves and values and has been accustomed to,—home (very often even her own country), relatives, and friends,—to go and live among strangers, whom she has never seen, whom she naturally cannot care for, to teach and take care of children who often look upon her with fear and dislike.

Her days are spent in giving lessons, in trying to correct bad habits and manners, in listening to the noise, often to the disputes, of unruly and quarrelsome children. And when evening comes, always tired, and often dispirited, she is left to the solitude of her own room, with a book and her own reflections. No beloved voice is there to cheer her ; no mother, or sister, or friend to encourage her in her arduous duties : she must bear the burden alone and unaided, except, indeed, by Him from

whom we may all look for help and comfort, unrepiningly and patiently.

Do you think, dear children, that such an existence can be a very happy or a very enviable one? and do you not think that we ought to do every thing in our power to soften and alleviate such a position? It is with you chiefly that this power lies.

To a person of elevated mind and of sensitive feeling, the mere material comforts of life cannot suffice: a warm room, a comfortable bed, and a good dinner are things to be appreciated in themselves, no doubt; but they cannot replace sympathy and affection, they cannot console for the absence of kind and loving friends.

You, her pupils, can render the life of your governess miserable by being inattentive, unruly, disobedient, and unkind; you can render it happy and pleasant by being attentive at your lessons, obedient to her wishes, and kind and affectionate in

your behaviour towards her. You can enable her to think of her lost home with less longing regret, by rendering yours a happy one to her, and you can prevent her from dwelling too painfully on the separation from her far-absent friends and relatives, by treating her with that kindness, respect, and consideration to which she has been accustomed, and which her devotion to you, and the confidence she enjoys from your parents, so fully entitle her to.

In honouring your teachers and instructors, you honour your father and mother, whose place they take when they cannot be with you, and you consequently discharge one of the duties most strictly enjoined by your heavenly Father. Consider it, therefore, my children, as a sacred duty, which nothing should prevent you from observing, and be assured that by conducing to the happiness of those placed near you, you adopt the surest way of adding to your own.

## PRAYER.

My God! Thou hast in Thy merciful goodness permitted me to be surrounded by persons who take care of me, instruct me, and who cultivate my mind and heart. They give to me their time and attention, they sacrifice to me their own favourite pursuits: to them, in return, I ought to give my respect, affection, and gratitude. Often thoughtless and perverse, I know that I cause pain and irritation to my instructors, and I therefore need Thy help, O Lord, in this instance, as in all others, to perform my duty. Give me the strength and inclination, then, to accomplish it as I ought, that I may strive to gain always Thy divine love and protection. Amen.

## Moses.

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"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were on the face of the earth."  
—NUMBERS xii. 3.

OF all the famous men of whom history, sacred or profane, has brought down to posterity the virtues, genius, and great deeds, Moses is, without doubt, the greatest and most extraordinary. His name and memory ought to be held sacred especially by us Israelites, for through him our ancestors were rescued from a cruel and dreadful bondage, through him they received the Almighty's holy commandments, and under his direction they were conducted to that Holy Land which had long before been promised them by the gracious and beneficent Maker.

Moses was born in Egypt, at a time when, on account of their continually increasing population, the Israelites had excited the fear and hatred of the people in whose land they had settled themselves. In the hopes of destroying and exterminating them, the most cruel oppression and tyranny were exercised against them; but in vain. God protected His chosen people; He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and the people still increased, in spite of the dreadful hardships they had to endure. At last, seeing that all other means failed, the King of Egypt resolved that all the male Israelite children should be destroyed as soon as they were born. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, succeeded in concealing her son, until he was three months old, when, probably fearing discovery, she placed him near the river's edge, in order that Pharaoh's daughter should see him. This princess was, no doubt, known to be of a merciful

and charitable disposition; and such indeed she proved herself to be by the manner in which she treated Moses. She took him home with her, and had him brought up as her own child; and thus was he saved from a cruel death, and preserved to be God's chosen instrument in rescuing His people.

Although nurtured in a palace, and, we may presume, surrounded by luxury and splendour, we have proof that he did not forget his poor suffering brethren, and that he was any thing but indifferent to their miseries. "One day as Moses went out unto his brethren and looked upon their burdens, he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren," and in his anger and indignation he slew the Egyptian. The deed became known, and, to avoid the consequences of the king's anger, he escaped out of Egypt and went into the land of Midian. Here he dwelt many years, tending the flocks of the priest

Jethro, whose daughter Zipporah he had married; and here, by deep contemplation and constant meditation, he prepared his mind for the great undertaking he was to be intrusted with, and sowed those seeds which made him worthy to become the inspired servant of the Almighty.

And all this time “the children of Israel cried by reason of their bondage, and their cry came up unto God, and God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.” The Almighty had chosen Moses to be their deliverer; but so stubborn was Pharaoh, so loath to let his unhappy slaves depart out of the land, that it was only by the help of wonders and miracles that Moses was enabled to accomplish God’s merciful purpose.

The chief characteristic of Moses’s disposition was his extreme meekness and

humility, which rendered him diffident and doubtful of his own powers to execute the great task to which God had appointed him. “What am I,” he replied to the Almighty’s injunctions, “that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” And again:—“Pardon, O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” Even when God had promised His all-powerful assistance, and, to encourage him, had shown him wondrous signs and tokens, even then Moses doubted his ability to perform God’s will, and expressed his reluctance to embark in so great and arduous an undertaking. The words, “O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send,” kindled the anger of the Lord against Moses, and he at length obeyed the oft-repeated commands.

The task accepted, Moses never once

swerved from the duties, difficult and arduous as they were, that it imposed upon him, and, through innumerable trials and difficulties, he, with God's help, brought the children of Israel forth from the land of bondage, and conducted them towards that promised land, flowing with milk and honey, which he himself was not permitted to enter.

To reach this promised land, a trackless desert was to be crossed; Moses had to lead an almost countless multitude of men, women, and children, whose privations of every kind—burning heat, hunger and thirst—caused them frequently to rebel and to murmur, and even to wish themselves again in Egypt, where, if they had hardships to endure, they had at least food to satisfy their hunger. Moses's prayers to the Almighty, who is ever merciful, never failed to bring food and water to the fainting multitude, and his entreaties for forgiveness for their repeated disobe-

dience and acts of revolt were always listened to; for the Almighty is also indulgent and long-suffering.

Moses spent forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai without nourishment, and there received from the hands of God Himself the commandments, which have not been the commandments of the Jews alone, but are obeyed and looked up to as coming from Divine goodness and wisdom by every people who know the Bible, and which, after a lapse of nearly four thousand years, form the basis of the moral code in all civilized countries.

“And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend; . . . and, behold, the skin of his face shone, and the people were afraid to come nigh, and till Moses had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face.” What other mortal ever enjoyed so high a privilege?

The one and only fault which we can

trace in Moses's character seems to have been a certain hastiness of temper, when his feelings were roused by indignation for an unjust or an unworthy action. We have proofs of this in his slaying the Egyptian who was ill treating an Israelite; in his throwing down and breaking the tables of stone on which the Almighty had written the ten commandments; in his just anger on seeing the people worshipping the golden calf as he descended from the Mount; and lastly, when irritated by the renewed murmurs and reproaches of the multitude, he spoke and acted unadvisedly in striking the rock at Meribah for water.

For this fault, which was, in truth, an act of disobedience, the Almighty punished him with the utmost severity, by forbidding him to enter the land of promise. No murmur escaped his lips at this severe sentence. But, if he had this one fault, his conduct during the forty years' wandering in the desert was all the more meritorious

and to be wondered at. Who is to measure the difficulty of the task imposed upon him?—the patience, the courage, the energy, and the forbearance required to lead a whole people, degraded by long oppression, accustomed to witness idolatrous worship, and anxious to gain the land where rich plenty was to be enjoyed! Without strong faith in the Almighty, firm reliance on and humble confidence in His merciful aid, and fervent and ceaseless prayers that this aid might not be withheld, even Moses—no ordinary mortal, but one inspired by God's spirit—would have sunk under such a task.

In spite of the frequent revolts and almost constant murmuring of the people against Moses, his tender pity towards them never wavered, and his prayers to the Almighty were constant to forgive the faults which moved His anger. What other mortal ever showed such love for his fellow-creatures, such self-abnegation, as Moses, when he said to the Almighty, on

the occasion of the people committing the sin of worshipping the golden calf, “ Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin——; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written”? But the Lord said unto Moses, “ Whosoever hath sinned against me, *him* will I blot out of my book.”

The Lord ordered Moses to go up on the mountain of Nebo, to see from there that Holy Land which he was not to enter. After having blessed the people of Israel, and foretold to them what would happen in years to come,—their happiness and prosperity as long as they followed and obeyed the laws and commandments of their God, their misfortunes and misery as soon as they should turn from and disobey them,—Moses died, aged a hundred and twenty years, “ and his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” “ And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to

face, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

## God's Attributes.

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"The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression."  
—NUMB. xiv. 18.

WITH what various emotions do these words fill our hearts ! with what sentiments of love, of gratitude, of tenderness, of hope, of shame, must we read them ! how deeply we ought to imprint them in our minds ! how constantly should they recur to our memories in our actions, and in our dealings with others !

They tell us that that Almighty Being, who is all-powerful, who is stainless in His holiness and purity, who is perfection in every one of His attributes, is long-suffering and of great mercy ; that He forgives our iniquities and our transgressions ; they mean that He looks upon us poor mortals

with tenderness and compassion; that He pities and understands, though He never shares, our numerous imperfections and weaknesses; that He has mercy upon our failings, our sins, and our disobedience. What, indeed, would become of us had we not so blessed an assurance? How could we bear the burden of our sins, which day upon day would be made heavier by despair, did we not rely on the pardon and forgiveness of Divine mercy? He looks down upon us from the inscrutable heights of His abode, and sees our actions, and reads our thoughts, and judges all with equal truth and mercy. He knows our weakness, and pities when the bad has conquered the good; He beholds our struggles, and rejoices when the good has overcome the evil; He is aware of the temptations to which we are exposed, and forgives when these temptations have subdued us; and, in spite of reiterated acts of disobedience to His holy commands, He

is still long-suffering, and pardons His repentant children.

Thus does Almighty God; and were it not so, how could we live?—and, above all, how could we bear the thoughts of death? How could we appear before so tremendous a Judge, sinful and erring—how could we endure to be ushered into the awful presence of the most Holy One—if we did not firmly hope in His mercy, rely on His forgiveness, have faith in His loving-kindness?

Thus does the Almighty; and how do *we*, sinful and imperfect as we are,—how do *we* act towards our fellow-creatures? Alas! not so. Where is *our* patience, and charity, and indulgence, and tenderness towards each other? How do *we* bear with one another's faults and imperfections? When do *we* forgive injuries and offences repeatedly committed against us? And here it is that sentiments of shame ought to overwhelm us.

We are often too ready to accuse others of the very faults we ourselves commit; we are lenient towards ourselves and severe towards our neighbour; the least weakness which we remark in another we are prone to blame or to ridicule, forgetting that we perhaps have something in ourselves at least as blamable or ridiculous. Do we often endeavour to turn away anger with kindness? No, indeed: we oftener return bitter words, thus widening the breach, and rendering a reconciliation difficult, even impossible. We, the children of the same merciful Father, do we always behave towards each other as brethren ought to do? We, who can see only the outward face, who know not what passes in the inner heart, have *we* the right to blame and to judge? We, who are faulty and imperfect, can *we* venture to pass judgment on those who are perhaps less faulty and less imperfect than we are ourselves?

Humility, a deep sense of our weak and sinful nature, would render us charitable and lenient towards our fellow-creatures. Let us pause ere we censure, and say to ourselves, Have I myself never acted thus? —or, if I have not committed this evil, is it not because the temptation and the opportunity have been spared me? We may condemn a fault in another which we cannot comprehend, and think particularly bad, because it is foreign to our nature; but, were we to seek conscientiously into the recesses of our own heart, should we not find there one at least as bad? A person of a calm and phlegmatic nature will perhaps consider with horror and dismay a person who gives way to violent fits of passion, and expatiates eloquently on the danger and wickedness of such ungovernable outbreaks; but has this person the same openness of temper, the same generosity of feeling, the same readiness to forgive, as the one he so severely blames?

You know somebody who has great susceptibility of temper, whom a word offends, a slight remark hurts: you complain of such a temper, think it foolish and weak, and pride yourself on your own calmness and equanimity which nothing can shake, while perhaps in the very person you attack there is a depth and delicacy of feeling, a warmth and devotedness of heart, which you are far from possessing yourself. We sometimes wonder at the strange conduct of certain persons; blame their levity, condemn their extravagance, disapprove openly of their mode of life. But do we always know the secret springs which actuate their conduct, or the excuses there may be for it? Perhaps their education has been neglected; the examples before them may have been bad, their youth uncared for or perverted. Oh, let us pause and consider well before we judge harshly, or rather let us *never* judge harshly, but, like our heavenly Father, let

us be merciful, and let us think that those whom we would condemn are like what we are ourselves, human and weak, and therefore apt to fail.

If towards the world at large we should cherish feelings of charity and kindness, how much more so, then, towards those who are around us, with whom we come in daily contact, and who are connected with us by the close ties of kindred? How much more should their faults and failings be treated with tenderness and forbearance, instead of being made the theme of bitter invective or contemptuous ridicule! A trifling offence from *them* should be instantly forgiven and forgotten, not met with angry retaliation. If mutual forbearance were the rule of life, how sweet, how happy, would be our daily intercourse with those we love! How calm and happy would be our home! how much strife and bitterness would be avoided! how much kindness and good will would

be encouraged! The Almighty is long-suffering and of great mercy towards His erring children: let *them* endeavour to imitate, as far as their imperfect nature will permit, such forbearance and charity towards each other, and half the misery mankind has to endure would disappear from the earth.

## The Precepts.

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"This commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."—DEUTERONOMY xxx. 11-14.

SUCH were the words of Moses when, after repeating the Law to the children of Israel, he exhorted them to obey it; he told them that the commands of God were clear and plain, that they were not in heaven, beyond their human comprehension, nor far over the seas, beyond their reach, but

before them, near them, even in their own mouths and their own hearts. He thereby assured them that nothing was required of them which it was not in their power to accomplish; nothing was demanded of them which, in their weakness and imperfection, they could not comply with.

I would show that thus it is with the duties that fall to our lot through life; I would impress upon your minds, my children, that these duties lie plainly, clearly, and unmistakably before you, that you need not go far, nor, indeed, out of your way, to seek them.

The great thing to be considered by all persons, in every position or station, is, or ought to be, For what am I placed on earth?—what are my daily duties?—what are my obligations towards my Creator and towards my fellow-creatures? These questions conscientiously answered, no doubt can be entertained of what *ought* to be done; what is *really* done depends upon our con-

stancy and energy, upon our unselfishness and self-denial, upon the standard of what is right, which we set up to ourselves. With some, alas! this standard is lamentably low. They seem to think that the end and object of their existence is the gratification of every selfish wish, the easy enjoyment of an idle life: if they *have* any definite ideas of what their real duties are—if they *are* aware of the obligations that men are under in their relations with one another—such consciousness is smothered by selfishness and frivolity.

Others there are whose standard of excellence is comparatively high; they have a pretty definite notion of the responsibility that rests upon them; they know and feel that there are duties to perform—duties serious, often arduous and painful; they know that their time ought to be diligently and usefully employed, not frittered away in mere worldly frivolities; they know, in short, that something more is required of a ra-

tional and immortal being than the gratification of his own inclinations, when these would merely lead to selfish indulgence. But it often happens that want of strength of purpose, that indolence, that a certain tendency to be led away by the bad example of others, prevent us from acting up to our own standard of right. We *know* what is right, but we find it difficult to *do* what is right.

We can perform a generous action from impulse; we can make some great sacrifice which will probably be required of us but once in our life; we are willing to render some important service, to make some unusual effort for the sake of another; in short, we can be quite ready to do something out of the common way—something very grand and very noble,—something, though, that will involve no lasting inconvenience, no constant effort, no enduring sacrifice, but that will, nevertheless, loudly redound to our praise.

But shall we be as ready for the daily small and insignificant (at least apparently so, for *no* duty is insignificant) and unnoticeable duties that lie before us, for the *drudgery* of life? While we shrink not from climbing the steep rock which we meet with but once on our way, shall we not, perhaps, be very apt to turn aside from the thorns that lie scattered all along our path? It is the *petty* annoyances of life that are difficult to bear; it is the steady and unflinching performance of *daily* duties that is often irksome. For instance; we have a favourite occupation we long to pursue, but constant interruptions take up our time in another manner; we love quiet and ease, but our avocations force us from home and our fireside; we delight in solitude, or a family circle, but our station in life renders it expedient that we should mix in society, receive visitors, and take a part in the turmoil of the world. Or, on the contrary, we love gayety and amusement, but

our destiny is to live quietly in the country, with only books for our companions, and poor people to visit. Perhaps we have to put up with ill temper, with want of sympathy; perhaps we have to smother our own inclinations to gratify those with whom we live; perhaps the whole tenor of our every-day life is totally unsuited to our taste. To bear thus to be thwarted, and to bend with cheerfulness to circumstances; to identify oneself completely with the station in life that Providence has placed us in, so that its exigencies become our rule, and the observance of these exigencies a fixed principle, from which we should never dream of swerving,—such is the accomplishment of daily duty. No need to seek far, no need to wait long, no need to look beyond our own sphere of action, to be gifted with other powers than those which nature has bestowed upon us, with greater means than have been given us.

The world will talk long and sing loudly

the praises of some noble deed, of some act of heroism (and it is well that men's hearts should throb at such things), but it will pass unheeded some poor obscure creature, whose whole life is, perhaps, one heroic struggle in the path of duty,—who is daily resisting temptations that poverty and desertion are forever flinging in his way,—who does acts of charity and generosity with his little, far greater than any act of munificence wrung from the plenty of many others. The *world* may pass by unheeding such heroism, but God surely does not. Our means may be small, our sphere of action may be limited, ourselves may be insignificant; but what matters that in the eyes of Him who sees and judges not as man sees and judges,—who judges the heart, not the outward act, and who knows the positive good in every action, while we can only compare the merits of one with the merits of another?

Let us, then, pray to Almighty God that

He may enlighten our minds, and show us the way wherein we ought to go ; but when the way is clear, then should we gird up our loins,—then should we be up and doing,—then should our courage and energy not flag. Let us remember that our duties lie plainly before us ; that we have but to take them up one by one as they come ; that they are not up in heaven, nor beyond the seas, but, like the Word, that they are very nigh unto us, even in our own mouths and in our own hearts.

THE END.

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